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Viewing cable 07KUALALUMPUR263, HONORARY CONSUL NOTES MALAYSIA AS SAFE HAVEN FOR

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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#07KUALALUMPUR263.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07KUALALUMPUR263	2007-02-13 08:13	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Kuala Lumpur

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.malaysia-today.net/mtcolumns/40593-shazryl-eskay-abdullah-tells-the-us-that-malaysia-is-a-terrorist-safe-haven>

VZCZCXRO5716
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHKL #0263/01 0440813
ZNY SSSS ZZH
P 130813Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8502
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2260
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2323
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2273
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KUALA LUMPUR 000263

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DEPT FOR EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2027

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [TH](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: HONORARY CONSUL NOTES MALAYSIA AS SAFE HAVEN FOR
THAI INSURGENCY, RELEVANCE OF OLD GUARD

REF: A. 06 KUALA LUMPUR 1764 - NO TEARS FOR THAKSIN

[1](#)B. 06 KUALA LUMPUR 1976 - SURAYUD'S VISIT

Classified By: Political Section Chief Mark D. Clark for reasons 1.4 (b
and d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (S) The Honorary Thai Consul in Langkawi, Malaysian businessman Shazryl Eskay Abdullah (protect throughout), described Thai Malay separatist use of Malaysian territory as a safe haven and insurgents' views of the conflict during a February 5 meeting with polchief. Eskay, who was a leading Malaysian facilitator of the dialogue with Thai insurgents hosted by former Prime Minister Mahathir, argued that the older generation insurgency leaders, mostly resident in Malaysia, remained relevant as they provided needed support services and safe haven to younger leaders. He identified only one old guard leader as actively ordering attacks, and estimated that criminal gangs and Thai security services were responsible for 70 percent of the recent violence. He said he did not see links yet between the Thai insurgents and regional or international terrorists, but recognized the potential and encouraged the U.S. to keep a close watch. He also noted, however, that the insurgents received financial assistance via Singapore from unknown sources. The now-ended peace initiative by Mahathir produced a ten-page "peace proposal" signed by old guard leaders, but which failed to gain much response from Bangkok. Eskay believed that the February 11-12 visit to Thailand by Prime Minister Abdullah would result in the Malaysian external intelligence organization (MEIO) taking up a "facilitation" role in discussions between Thai intelligence and southern insurgents, though Eskay was pessimistic as to the prospects. Eskay shared a 12-page paper on the insurgency and Thai Malay views, resulting from his interviews with numerous separatist leaders, which he had submitted to MEIO February [1](#)1. End Summary.

Honorary Consul as Mediator with Separatists

[1](#)2. (S) Polchief called on the Honorary Thai Consul in Langkawi, Shazryl Eskay Abdullah, on February 5 as part of a February 5-9 visit to Malaysian states along the border with Thailand (septel). Eskay, a Malaysian businessman of mixed Malaysian-Thai parentage, described his significant "mediator" role in the 2005-2006 dialogue with Thai Malay insurgents, which featured former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, and his frequent interaction with separatists on both sides of the border. Eskay said he carried out his work on the Thai insurgency largely independent of the Thai and Malaysian governments, and maintained direct links with most known Malay separatist leaders resident in Malaysia. To bolster his credentials, he showed polchief video footage he had recorded of various meetings with men he described as elder separatist leaders and younger operators.

Old Guard Not Calling the Shots, but Still Relevant

[1](#)3. (S) Eskay noted that most of the older generation of Malay separatist leaders lived in Malaysia with the Malaysian Government's knowledge and acquiescence. The older generation included those affiliated with the United Pattani Freedom Front (BERSATU), and the constituent groups the National Revolutionary Front (BRN-Congress), the Pattani Mujahiddin Movement (GMP), and the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO). In addition, Eskay confirmed that younger generation separatists, including those involved in recent attacks in southern Thailand, frequently entered Malaysia, particularly when the situation became "too hot" and they required safe haven. The GOM was not always aware

of the identity and travel of younger separatists. With some exceptions, the older generation did not direct the actions of the younger insurgents. However, Eskay argued that the relevance of the "old guard" should not be underestimated. The older leaders, with well-established networks in Malaysia, constituted the support service for the insurgents, providing shelter and transportation, and arranging jobs, including in Thai restaurants and on rubber estates. Because the older generation provided needed safe haven services,

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they remained influential and relevant to a potential peace dialogue with Thailand's Malay south. (Comment: Many of our other interlocutors dismissed the Mahathir-led dialogue because it focused on the older Malaysia-based separatists who no longer represent the insurgency on the ground. End Comment.)

The Murky Business of Violence

14. (S) Like many other Malaysians we interviewed during our trip to northern Malaysia, Eskay described the Malay insurgency as splintered, with operations currently carried out by very small cells, comprised of two or three persons. "Brokers" would task the cells with orders and money. Often times the affiliation of the brokers would not be clear to the cells, opening the possibility that they represented other parties, but cells would carry out "orders" nonetheless both for monetary gain and for fear that they otherwise would run afoul of other insurgents. The cell members generally were technically unsophisticated and the brokers often provided the improvised explosive devices to be planted and detonated by the cells. Eskay crudely estimated that Malay separatists accounted for only 30 percent of attacks in the south with Thai army, police and intelligence agency factions, along with criminal gangs, responsible for the balance. Eskay relayed that many insurgent leaders believed deposed Prime Minister Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai party advisor General Chavalit were funding much of the recent violence. Insurgent members had denied association with New Year's Eve bombings in Bangkok. They also disassociated themselves from many of the attacks on schools. The fracturing of the separatist movement and use of small cells added to the complexity and the difficulty in identifying any leaders for dialogue. Eskay named only one old guard leader, BRN-Congress Vice President Abdullah bin Idris, as responsible for ordering some of the ongoing attacks in southern Thailand.

Safe Passage

15. (S) In addition to the Mahathir-led dialogue and frequent informal meetings with Thai separatists, Eskay said he had arranged meetings between Malaysian intelligence and various insurgents operating in Thailand, meetings which included an understanding of safe passage within Malaysia. Even on Malaysian soil, Thai Malay militants did not feel safe from possible assassination or kidnapping. On at least one occasion, a Thai bounty hunter had bribed local Malaysian police to abduct a separatist who was in Malaysia. Eskay had intervened to release the target, whom the Malaysian police officer had locked in trunk of his police car.

No International Terror Links...Yet

16. (S) Eskay stated that he had seen no evidence the Malay separatists had linked up with external terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda or Jemaah Islamiyah. He noted, however, that some insurgents received funds from a bank in Singapore (NFI), which passed through money changers in the Malaysian border town of Padang Besar, Perlis state. Eskay did not know the origin of the funds. Though there was in his view a clear potential for a link-up with terrorist groups, Eskay

commented that Malaysian intelligence did not pay adequate attention to this risk and he encouraged the U.S. to keep a close watch on developments.

February 2006 "Peace Proposal"

17. (S) The Mahathir-led dialogue had resulted in a "peace proposal" in February 2006, signed by old guard leaders of BERSATU, BRN-Congress, GMP, and PULO, Eskay noted. This had met with no substantive response from the Thai Government, but might constitute a good starting point for future dialogue. Eskay provided us with a copy of the ten-page document, which demanded Thai Government actions in eight areas, namely:

-- Improvements in "leadership," through appointment of a Muslim Affairs Minister and a Muslim affairs coordinating

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body.

-- Improved government communication and networking with Malay Muslim communities.

-- Confidence-building measures, including establishing ethnic Malay quotas for government service and security forces in the south.

-- Steps to promote investment and economic development.

-- Improvements in the education infrastructure.

-- Amnesty, with individual cases approved by a Board of Review.

-- Establishment of a tribunal to investigate and try cases of human rights violations.

-- Establishment of a monitoring committee to ensure implementation of the above steps.

Malaysian External Intelligence May Take the Lead

18. (S) Eskay said the Mahathir initiative was now over, and the Malaysian Government had made clear that the phase of "NGO involvement" in dialogue with Thai Malay separatists had come to an end. The February 11-12 visit to Thailand by Prime Minister Abdullah likely would confirm a role for the Malaysian External Intelligence Organization (MEIO) as a "facilitator" for future informal talks between Malay separatists and Thai Government intelligence. Eskay supported a Malaysian Government mediation role, but he was pessimistic MEIO and its Thai counterparts would make progress. Instead, Eskay anticipated continued violence. The Honorary Thai Consul shared a 12-page "confidential" paper on the insurgency and Thai Malay views, resulting from his interviews with numerous separatist leaders, which he had submitted to MEIO February 1. Eskay requested that we not share the paper and February 2006 "peace proposal" with others (we have forwarded the documents via classified email to EAP/MTS and Embassy Bangkok).

Comment

19. (S) Eskay credibly appeared to have contacts with a large pool of old guard leaders, insurgents, and sympathizers from Thailand's Malay south. His views on the insurgency were the most detailed we heard during five days of travel in northern Malaysia and tracked well in many respects with information and opinions from others. His belief in the usefulness of engaging the old guard, however, contradicted the opinion of Malaysian politicians, officials and police who generally dismissed the old timers as irrelevant. Several Malaysians

volunteered they were suspicious of Eskay's contacts with Malay separatists and alleged Eskay had been involved in controversial business deals in the past (unrelated to Thailand). Eskay informed us that he had lived some ten years in the United States circa the 1980s.

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